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CITY CLERK

25 August 2009

Seattle City Council
Planning, Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee
c/o Seattle City Clerk
600 Fourth Avenue, Floor 3
P.O. 94728
Seattle, WA 98124-4728

Dear Seattle City Councilmembers,

I am writing to appeal the decision of the Hearing Examiner in the matter of the application of Seattle Children's Hospital for approval of a Major Institution Master Plan. I am a resident of the Laurelhurst neighborhood and have served as the vice chair of the Seattle Children's Hospital Major Institution Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) for the past two years.

After being actively engaged and deeply involved in the review process for Children's proposed expansion for over two years, I am extremely disappointed at the final conclusions reached by the Hearing Examiner and disagree with the recommendation to deny the proposed Master Plan for Children's Hospital. I specifically object to the conclusion that the City's urban village strategy takes precedent over the City's Major Institution Master Plan process in determining acceptable height, bulk and scale of the proposed expansion as well as the conclusion that the traffic impacts of the expansion can not be mitigated. While the findings of the Hearing Examiner indicate significant agreement with the CAC's majority report, her final recommendation to deny the Master Plan serves to undermine the entire process in which the CAC participated.

The CAC took its role in the Master Plan process—that is, to balance the institution's need to grow in order to continue to serve the community with the need to protect the livability and vitality of the surrounding neighborhoods—very seriously. We put in long hours over the course of this process: reviewing several iterations of the Master Plan and EIS, attending a total of 26 public meetings plus several half-day subcommittee meetings, and listening to and reviewing public testimony and written public comments. The CAC was comprised of an exceptional cross section of concerned, dedicated neighbors and community members and included representatives from all of the surrounding neighborhoods. In terms of expertise and experience, the committee included an architect, three members with experience in building development, and three members with land use experience. We brainstormed and argued and negotiated with each other and with the hospital in order to find a solution that would enable the hospital to continue to adequately serve the children of our community with minimal adverse impact on the surrounding communities. By the end of the process, the majority of the CAC believed we had achieved that goal with our final set of recommendations and voted to recommend that the Master Plan be adopted by the City, as modified by those recommendations.

The overall height, bulk and scale of the proposed expansion were the primary focus of the CAC's deliberations, and we devoted a significant amount of time and effort to evaluate the impacts of the various designs on the surrounding communities. We walked the neighborhoods surrounding the

hospital, reviewed photo montages, and examined the proposed expansion plans from every possible angle. Although we understood that the Children's site was outside a defined "urban village" and that the heights proposed were greater than other major institutions outside an urban village, we did not believe that these facts in any way limited the CAC from making an independent assessment of the appropriate balance between the need of the hospital to grow and the need to protect the livability of the adjacent neighborhoods. In fact, that was the role we considered to be before us. The Hearing Examiner's decision to rely on the City's urban village strategy to deny the proposed expansion shows a complete disregard of the CAC process, which was designed to recognize the unique and valuable services that the major institutions in the city, such as Seattle Children's Hospital, offer and to allow their proposed development plans to be considered through a unique and thoughtful process.

Traffic impacts of the proposed expansion were also a major concern for the CAC throughout the process. The CAC agreed that the increased volume of traffic resulting from the expansion would have significant impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods and NE Seattle in general without substantial mitigation. However, unlike the Hearing Examiner, the majority of the CAC concluded that most of the impact could be mitigated. Our decision was largely based on the work of the independent consultant, Marni Heffron, who worked closely with the CAC to evaluate the traffic impacts and mitigation strategies. From my own perspective, this decision was also based on credible public testimony we heard from other transportation experts that the combination of the major elements of Children's Transportation Management Plan, most notably improvements to shuttle and bus service and substantial investments that the hospital has offered to make to improve area transportation facilities, would significantly alleviate the negative impacts of the expansion.

Due to extensive public interest, the review process for Seattle Children's Hospital Master Plan has been long and drawn out. In the meantime, the hospital has fallen behind in making needed improvements to its emergency department and adding the beds required to provide care for children in our region. As a member of an influenza vaccine development team at PATH, I am particularly concerned with the approaching flu season and the impact of the H1N1 pandemic, which will undoubtedly result in a greater than normal demand for services at Children's. The need to act on Seattle Children's Hospital Master Plan application is urgent. I implore the City Council to reconsider the Hearing Examiner's recommendations and move quickly this fall to approve the Seattle Children's Hospital Master Plan as modified by the recommendations presented in the majority report of the Citizens Advisory Committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,



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